

Weimar Germany 1918-1933

History 112

Date

The Origins of Totalitarianism

Hannah Arendt, 1951



"The aim of totalitarian education has never been to instil convictions but to destroy the capacity to form any."

Hannah Arendt

Nineteen Eighty-Four

George Orwell, 1949

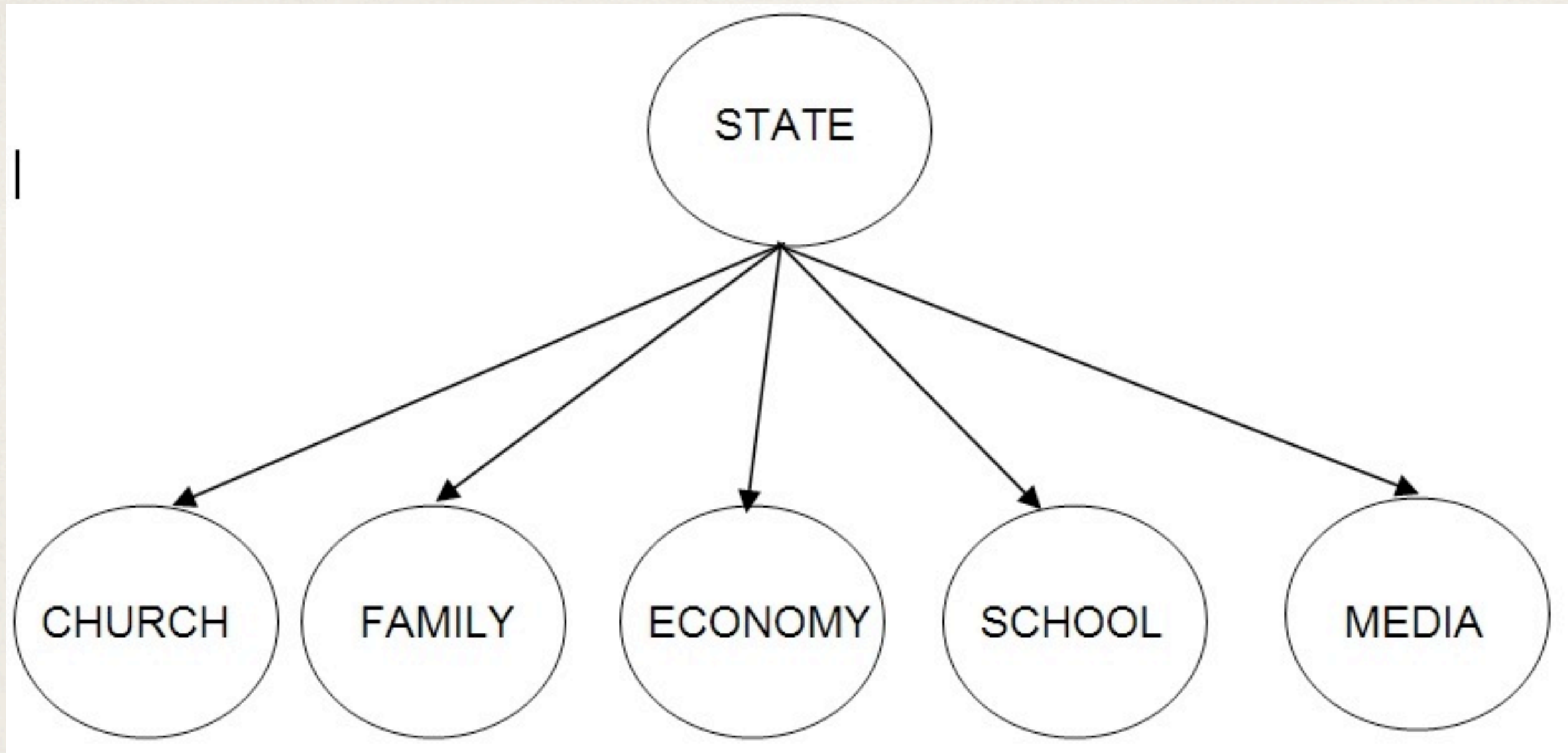


“Then the face of Big Brother faded away
again and instead the three slogans of the
Party stood out in bold capitals:

WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

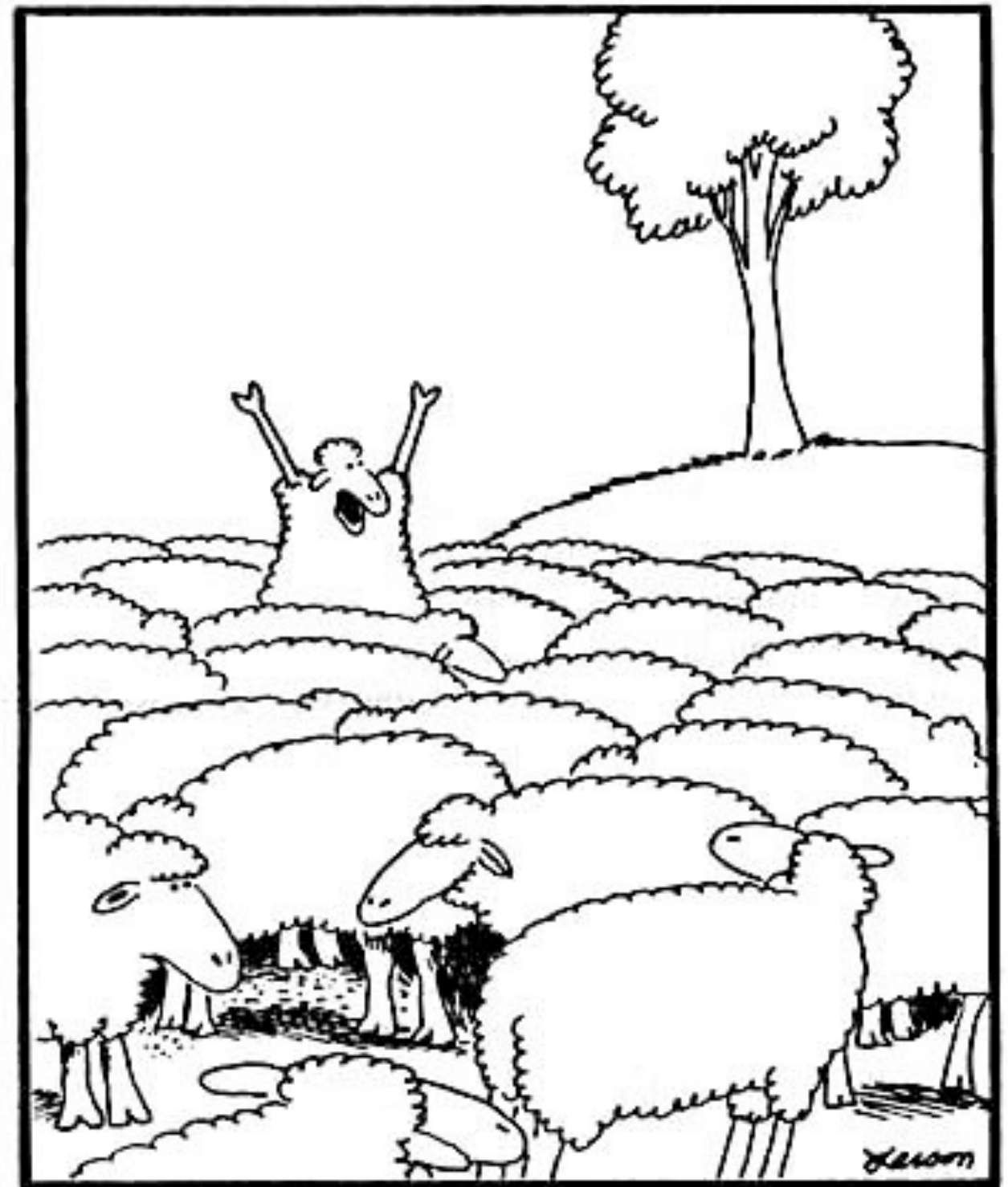
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH”



Get the picture?

Why do People Follow?

How do Totalitarian governments succeed in taking over?



"Wait! Wait! Listen to me! . . . We don't HAVE to be just sheep!"



Does this image suggest an answer?

Study the image for 2 minutes and then discuss what you see.

Date

They (who) seek to establish

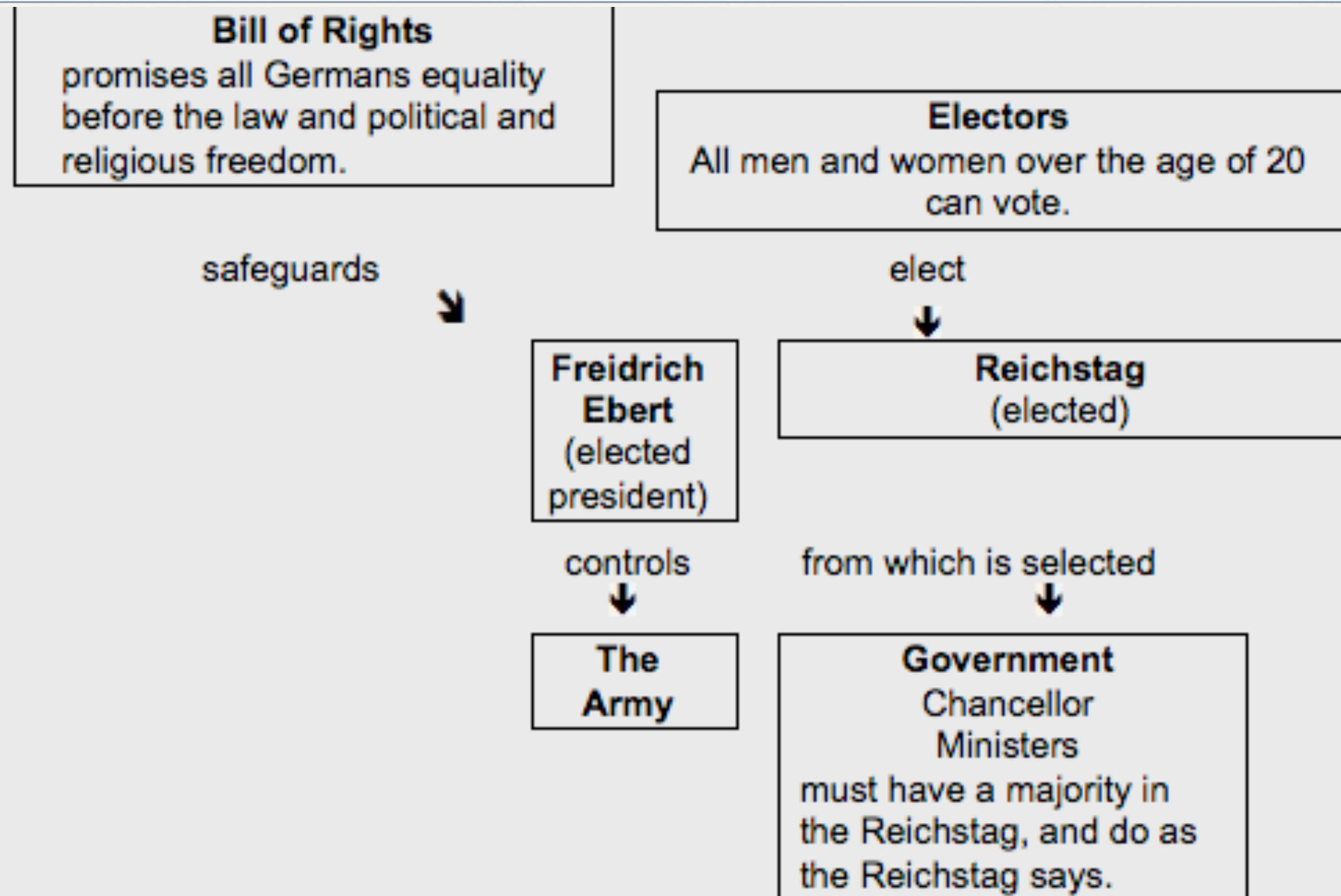
systems of government based on
the regimentation of all human
beings by a handful of individual
rulers ...call this a new order. It is
not new and it is not order.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

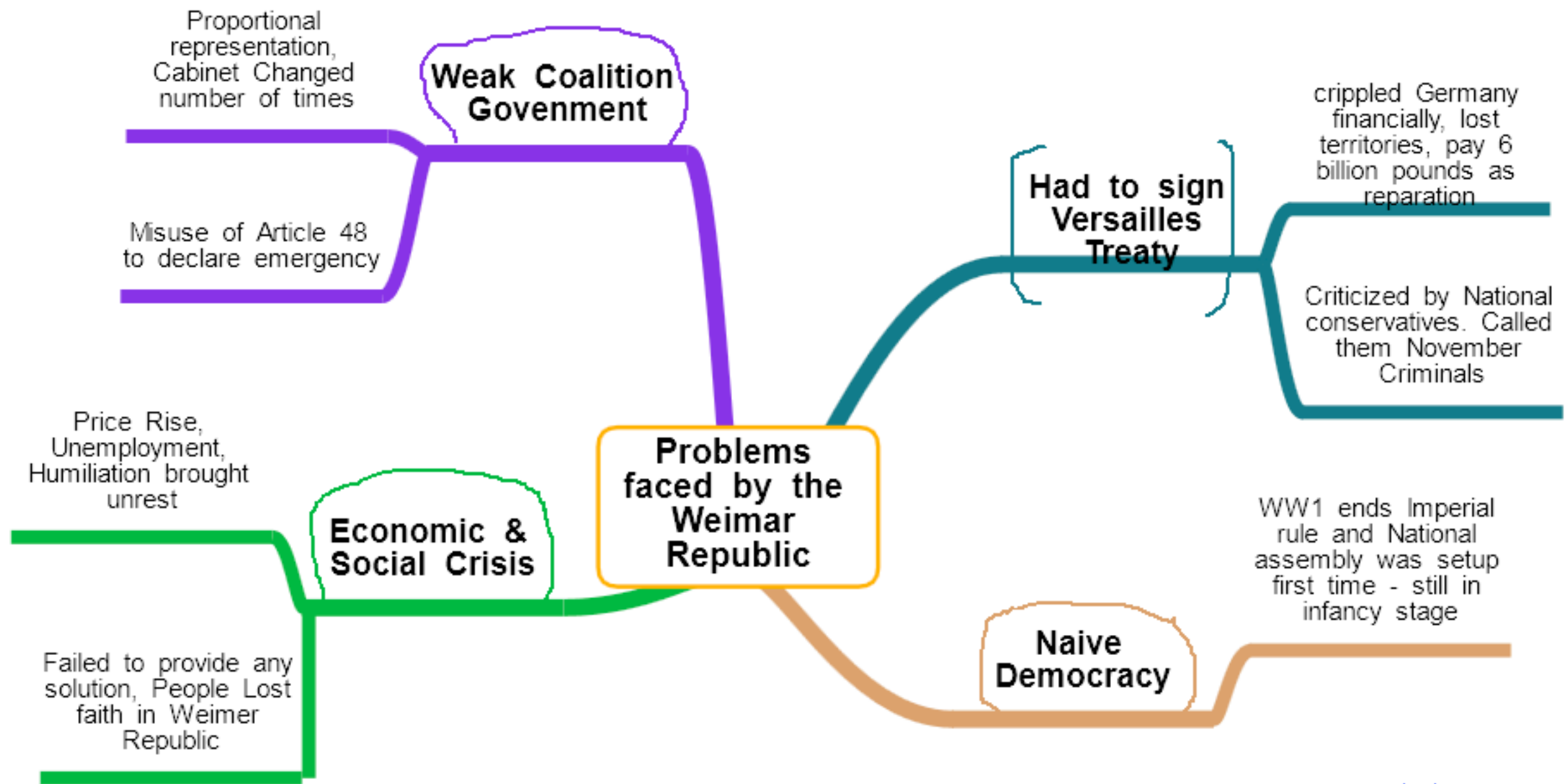
Weimar Germany 1918-1933

- ❖ Pronounced: “Vi-Mar”
- ❖ German Republic
 - ❖ Sometimes called Second Reich (1st was 1871-1918, 3rd is Nazis)
 - ❖ No Kaiser / King - Elected President instead
 - ❖ Elected Legislature called “Reichstag”
 - ❖ Leader of Reichstag was Chancellor - like our Prime Minister

Weimar Germany: Fledgling Democracy



Weimar Republic Problems



People are afraid of chaos and
disorder.

The Nazis Are NOT Inevitable

Hyper-Inflation in Weimar Germany

- ❖ John Maynard Keynes: *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (Book)
- ❖ *"The inflationism of the currency systems of Europe has proceeded to extraordinary lengths. The various belligerent Governments, unable, or too timid or too short-sighted to secure from loans or taxes the resources they required, have printed notes for the balance."*
- ❖ Meaning: Germany did not want to tax the population to get money, so they printed it.
- ❖ Effect: Money lost its agreed upon value, and more and more of it was needed to buy things. The money eventually became worthless.

So, what does Hyper-Inflation
look like?



Date: **4 YEAR CYCLE** **German Marks needed to buy one ounce of gold**

Jan 1919	→ HUNDREDS	170.00
Sept 1919		499.00
Jan 1920		1,340.00
Sept 1920		1,201.00
Jan 1921	→	1,349.00
Sept 1921		2,175.00
Jan 1922	→	3,976.00
Sept 1922	→	30,381.00
Jan 1923		372,477.00
Sept 1923	MILLIONS	269,439,000.00
Oct 2, 1923		6,631,749,000.00
Oct 9, 1923	BILLIONS	24,868,950,000.00
Oct 16, 1923		84,969,072,000.00
Oct 23, 1923	→	1,160,552,882,000.00
Oct 30, 1923		1,347,070,000,000.00
Nov 5, 1923	TRILLIONS	8,700,000,000,000.00
Nov 30, 1923	→	87,000,000,000,000.00

The German hyperinflation occurred over a period of several years

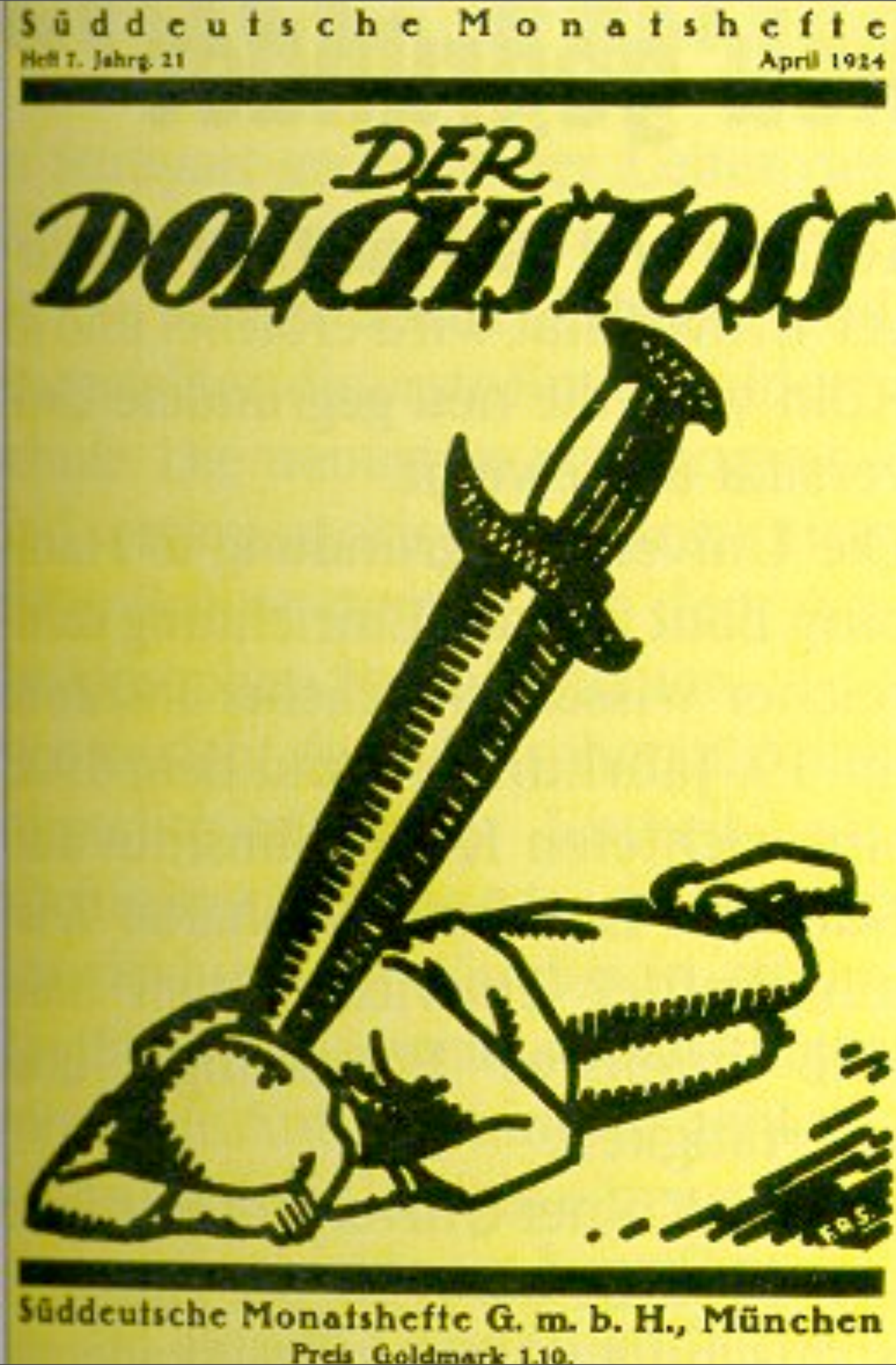


Scapegoats: All of this *cannot* be blamed on the Treaty of Versailles

- ❖ Only about one third of tax money went to reparations payments.
- ❖ Government did not spend money well.
- ❖ Too easy to blame reparations for all problems - but it is not accurate.

Weimar's Problems

- ❖ “November Criminals” blamed by extremist political parties for all of Germany’s problems.
- ❖ Extremists portrayed Weimar government as stabbing Germany in the back.
- ❖ Democracy never given a fighting chance.
- ❖ Extremists wanted to destroy democratic government.



Article 48 and the Reichstag Fire

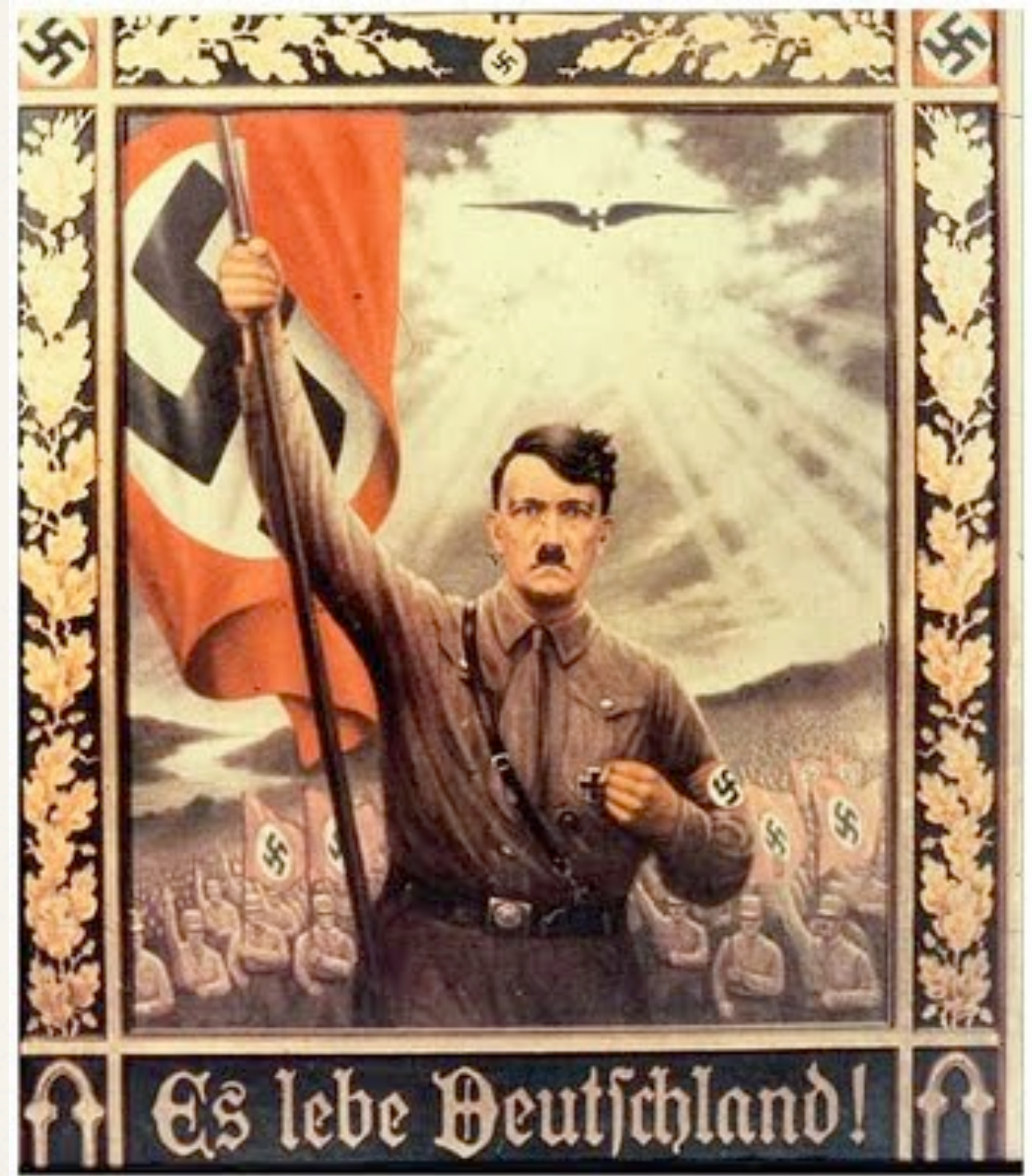
Weimar Constitution:

- ❖ “In case public safety is seriously threatened or disturbed, *the Reich President may take the measures necessary to reestablish law and order, if necessary using armed force.* In the pursuit of this aim he may suspend the civil rights described in articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 154, partially or entirely.”



How to Manipulate an Election:

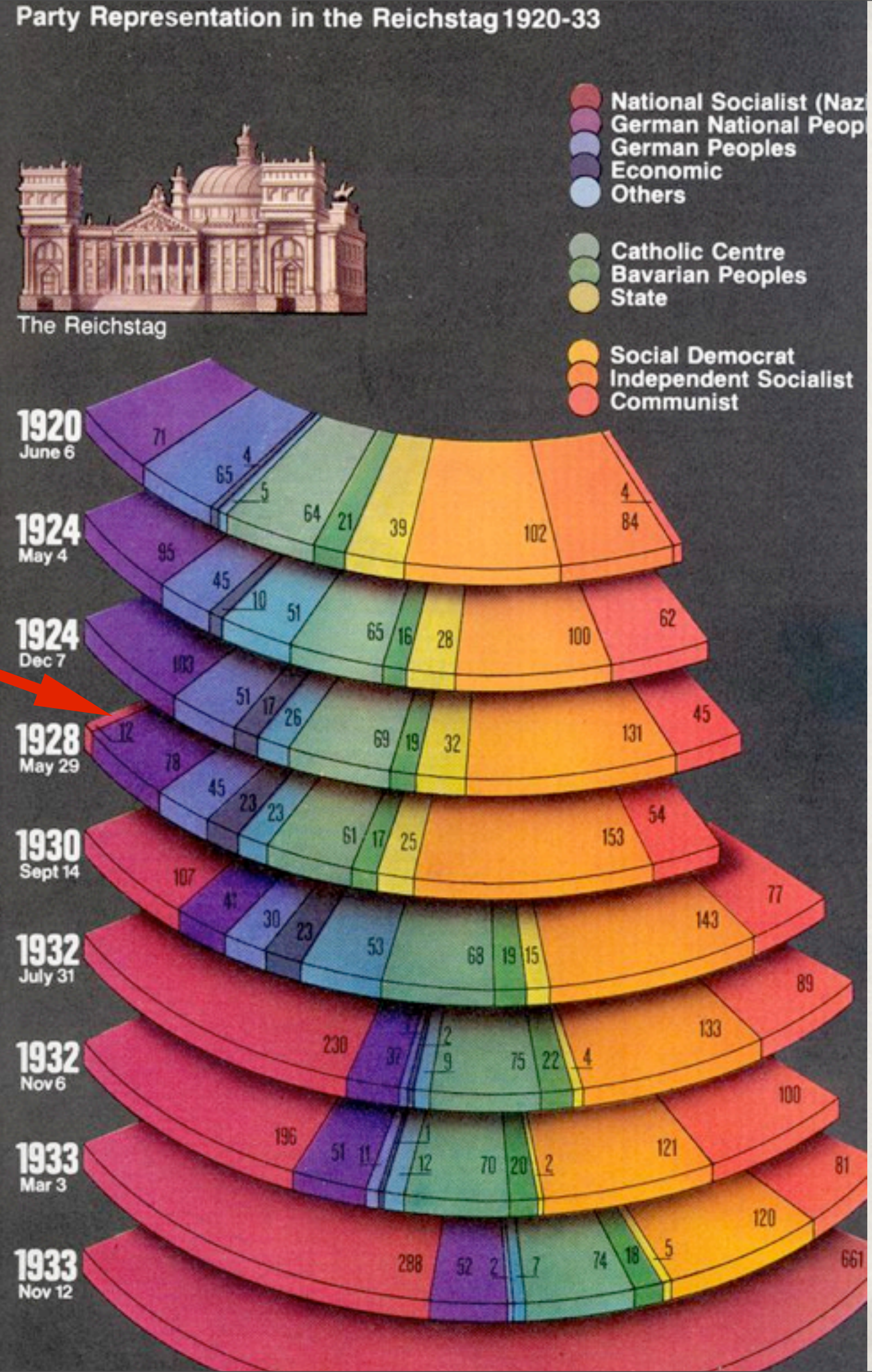
- ❖ Reichstag Fire - set by Nazis
- ❖ Nazis blame Communists
- ❖ Convince President Hindenburg to invoke Article 48
- ❖ Ban Opposition parties from campaigning
- ❖ Portray Hitler as saviour of Germany
- ❖ “Win” election

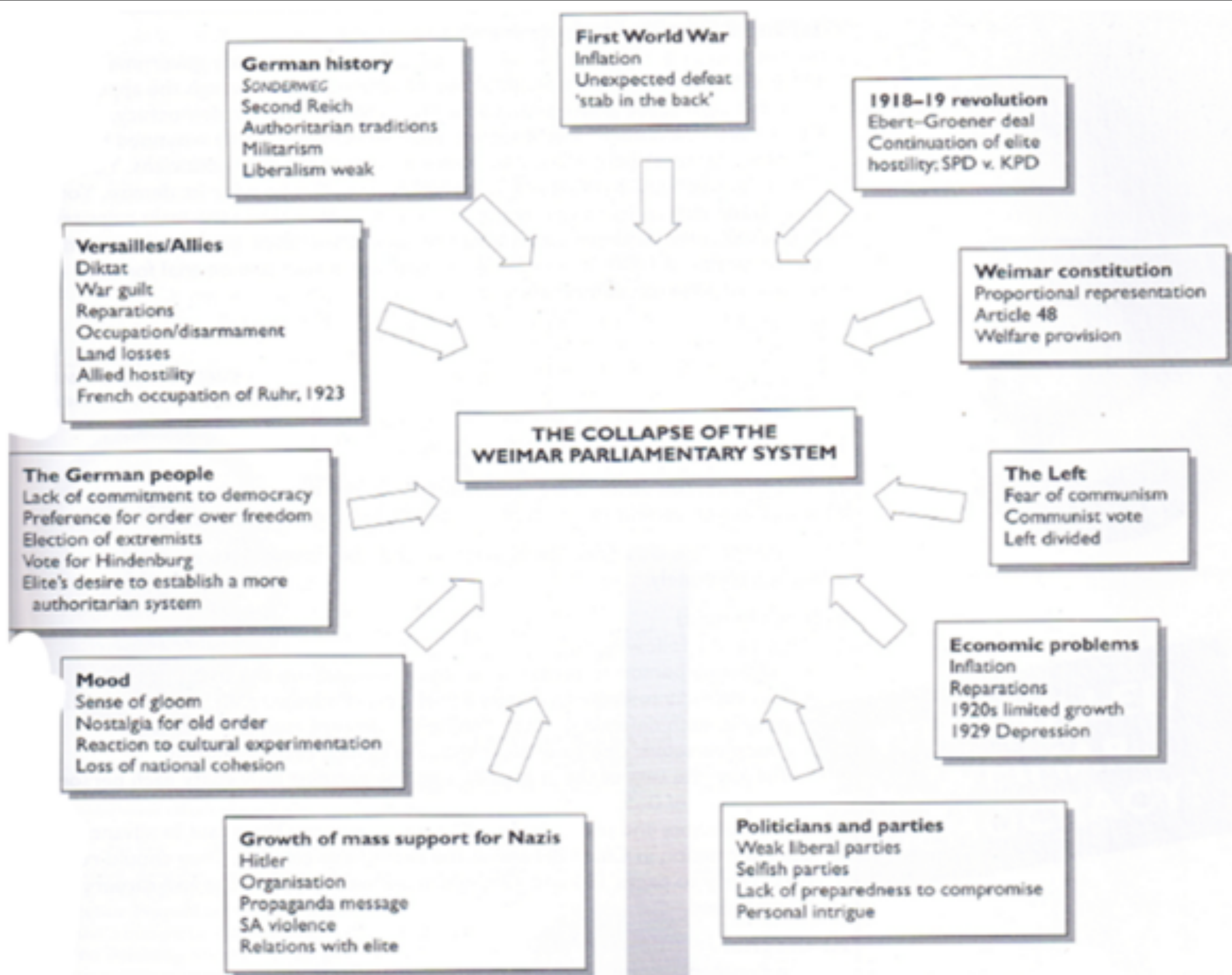


Weak Coalitions

Note the growth of the Nazis

- ❖ Democratic Parties were initially strong, but as the economic situation worsened people began to support increasingly extremist parties





So why do people follow?

- ❖ End to Fear: Nazis offer structure, order and promise an end to chaos
- ❖ Nostalgia: Nazis appeal to militaristic past when Germany was a great power.



Structure, Order, Power

The Nazis portrayed themselves as the only way forward for Germany

Nuremberg Rally, 1936

By the time the German people
realized what the Nazis really were

it was too late to do anything about it.

In Germany, first they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up.

Pastor Martin Neimöller
1959